

Eagle Days

If you’ve never seen a bald eagle in the wild, then what are you waiting for? You don’t need to go to Alaska or the Great Lakes. Missouri is the winter home to thousands of bald eagles



migrating from northern states. Unfrozen water for fishing and a taste for migrating waterfowl make our state a winter haven for eagles. An opportunity to view eagles this winter will be at Eagle Days at Smithville Lake on January 5–6 and at Schell-Osage Conservation Area on

February 2. Special activities and spotting scopes will be set up for your eagle viewing pleasure. For more information, check for Eagle Days events at www.mdc.mo.gov



What is it? Frost flowers “bloomed” in the Discovery Center prairie garden on the stems of dittany and wingstem during a hard freeze when the ground temperature was still above freezing. Water trapped in the pithy stems of the plants froze and expanded thus forming ribbons of ice or “frost flowers.” *Photo by Matthew Bunch.*



WHOOOO’S FOR DINNER?

Owls don’t hibernate or fly south, so winter is the best time to observe and study them. Listen for the mating calls of great horned owls and barred owls in early December. By early February, owls are active looking for nests. A moonlit winter night is a great time to see an owl silhouetted against a cold, starry sky. On Saturday, January 5th, at the Discovery Center, owls will be the subject of three workshop activities. You can build a screech owl house in *Whoooo’s Home*, dissect an owl pellet in *Whoooo’s for Dinner*, or create a junk yard owl from household trash in *Junk Yard Owls*.

Participants will discover bones of birds and rodents as they dissect owl pellets in the “Whoooo’s for Dinner” program January 5th at the Discovery Center.



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Anita B. Gorman
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Discovery Center

WINTER
2008

Grow Native Day at the Discovery Center

A SPECIAL EVENT SATURDAY, MARCH 29



If you have admired the Discovery Center wildflower gardens and wondered how native plants would work in your home landscape, then you won’t want to miss this special event! We’ll get you growing with the right stuff to transform your yard into a native haven for Missouri plants and wildlife. Learn how to grow a backyard prairie garden or create your own raingarden. We’ll have native trees and plant seedlings to give away and fun-filled activities for the kids. For less moving, less watering, less annual planting, and more wildlife in your backyard this summer, join us this spring and start growing native!

WILDFLOWER ART EXHIBIT

*Paintings from
Wildflower
Gardens*



Landscape painter and Kansas City native John Carroll will exhibit twenty impressionist style paintings at the Discovery Center from January through March. Join us for an opening reception Saturday, January 12, at 1 p.m. to welcome the artist and view his work. John has been painting landscapes for 40 years and has spent the last year capturing on canvas the beauty of the Discovery Center and Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary wildflower gardens in all seasons.

Roadside Rodents on the Rise

What was that big furry rodent you saw on the side of the road last week? Was it a beaver, a marmot, a woodchuck, or a groundhog? If it had a large flat tail, it might have been a beaver. If you were in the Rocky Mountains, it might have been a marmot. Or if you were in Kansas City, it probably was a groundhog or a woodchuck, one in the same. To scientists, they are known as *Marmota* (Latin for marmot) *monax* (Native American for digger.) Today, we’ll call them woodchucks and, for Groundhog Day, we’ll call them groundhogs!

Whatever they’re called, we’re seeing more of them in the city these days, especially while driving. It seems like woodchucks are attracted to roadside borders, gullies, fence lines, and road cuts. In the wild, they prefer the natural borders between fields and forest where they dig burrows to escape predators and spend the winter in hibernation.

Woodchucks are vegetarians, sometimes preferring your vegetable garden to their main diet of leaves, flowers, and succulent grasses. Along roadsides, they might be attracted to the lush plant life found in wet

ditches and gullies. Woodchucks are also known to eat roadside sand and gravel—apparently to obtain salt deposited from winter snow removal. Except for the four-wheeled predators, urban and suburban roadsides seem like relatively safe havens for woodchucks where natural predators are less

likely to be on the hunt. Whatever the reasons for the apparent increase in woodchuck roadside sightings, we’re glad they’re around. They’re fun to watch. And we’ll be glad to have you around on Groundhog Day (Saturday, February 2) for a fun day learning all about woodchucks!



ILLUSTRATION: CHARLES SCHWARTZ 1980

DISCOVERY CENTER

winter calendar

We think you'll be excited about our new and varied offerings this winter at the Anita B. Gorman Discovery Center. Activities marked *Walk-in* do not require registration. Those activities that require reservations are marked *By reservation*. **Call 816-759-7300**. Space is limited, so register early! Parents or guardians must accompany children under the age of 12.

december

1 MAMMALS OF MISSOURI
Walk-in (All ages) Learn about the wild mammals of Missouri. Touch a pelt, make a track identification book, and play the mammal maze.
Saturday, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

1 STORYBOOK SATURDAY
By reservation (Ages 3 and up) Learn about nature as you listen to stories about bears, foxes, trees and much more. Make a craft, take a nature hike or play a game that relates to your story.
Saturday, 10–11 a.m.

8 HOLIDAY HARVEST
Walk-in (All ages) Enjoy the bounty and beauty of the season by participating in our make and take activities. Enjoy the ornaments, crafts, and gifts that display a conservation theme for this holiday event. Take a cold weather hike and look for evidence of holiday visitors, then warm up inside the Discovery Center viewing a video of your choice. For more information, see the front page feature.
Saturday, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

15 WINTER FISHING EXPO
Walk-in (All ages) Does the winter weather have you dreaming of the lake? Warm up your fishing skills at the Discovery Center practicing casting, tying flies and lures, making pop bottle fish, and more. There will be activities for all ages as you either learn new skills or brush up on skills already established.
Saturday, 9 a.m.–2 p.m.

15 STORYBOOK SATURDAY
By reservation (Ages 3 and up) Learn about nature as you listen to stories about bears, foxes, trees and much more. Make a craft, take a nature hike or play a game that relates to your story.
Saturday, 10–11 a.m.

january

5 WHOOOO'S HOME
Walk-in (Ages 9 and up) What do you do if your house is gone? We humans destroy a great deal of natural habitat for our wildlife. Screech owls start their nesting cycle in early February and it's our turn to help them find a place to raise their young. Use this time in January to build a screech owl house and provide a home for this important predator.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

5 WHOOOO'S 4 DINNER?
Walk-in (All ages) Back by popular demand! Do you know what your friendly neighborhood predator has been having for dinner? Explore the world of owls as you dissect your way through an owl pellet, discovering what was the prey of the day!
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

5 JUNK YARD OWLS
Walk-in (All ages) Did you know that owls are one of the most portrayed animals in art and culture? Create your own modern masterpiece of an owl using discarded household junk and recycled materials.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

12 WHOSE HOOVES?
Walk-in (All ages) Do you discover tracks in the snow and wish you knew what animal previously traveled through? Come practice your track identification skills and make a track book to refer to on your next exploration.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

12 WILD MAMMALS OF MISSOURI
Walk-in (All ages) Learn all about the wild mammals of Missouri. Touch a mammal pelt, walk the mammal maze, and enjoy our beautiful mounted mammal displays.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

19 BACKYARD BRRRR'DS
Walk-in (All ages) Find out which feathery friends you'll see on a cold Missouri day. Enjoy a short birding hike on the nature trail and see what birds stick around through the winter. We'll return to the lobby and make a simple feeder.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

19 FEATHER EXPLORATION
Walk-in (All ages) How do feathers help a bird fly? How do birds keep warm on these blustery cold days of winter? Take a close look at actual bird feathers to answer these questions, then finish up by making a feather rubbing.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

19 CITY SLICKERS WINTER HIKE
By reservation (Ages 10 and up) Trail guide David Western will lead a winter expedition along the rocky slopes and ancient oaks of the Fox Hollow Trail located near Lakeside Nature Center in Swope Park. We'll meet at the Discovery Center. Be sure to dress appropriately for the weather and bring a sack lunch.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

19 JOHN CARROLL ART EXHIBIT OPENING
Walk-in (All ages) Kansas City landscape artist John Carroll will be here to open an exhibit featuring 20 of his recent impressionist paintings depicting the Discovery Center gardens and landscape. Meet the artist and join us for some light refreshments.
Saturday, 1–3 p.m.

26 NATURE PRINTMAKING
Walk-in (All ages) Looking for a way to add a splash of color to your weary winter habitat? Learn to identify Missouri trees while creating colorful nature prints on the etching press using tree leaves and block inks.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

26 I'M HUNGRY–HELP FEED ME
Walk-in (Ages 9 and up) Would you like to invite the birds to a dinner in your backyard? Come in and learn about feeding birds and build a bird feeder for them. Find out about their food preferences during this cold January day.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

february

2 SHADOWY SIGHTS
Walk-in (All ages) On Groundhog Day, we focus on shadows; if the groundhog sees a shadow, it indicates a longer winter while no shadow means spring is on its way. Measuring the sun's movement across the sky and its resulting shadows show us time and seasonal change. Stop by to experiment with light and shadows and make a sundial to take home.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

2 THE GROUNDHOG HAS ITS DAY
Walk-in (All ages) The hibernating woodchuck, or groundhog—as it's commonly known, spends 4–6 months in its winter den emerging in February to search for a mate. We'll learn more about this harbinger of spring as we make tracks and learn to enjoy this backyard visitor.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

16 BIRD BRAINS
Walk-in (Kids of all ages) While birdwatching at the Discovery Center, it might be fun to blend in with the flock by sporting a bird hat made from paper, feathers, and hot glue. Learn about the habitats of cardinals and blue jays and discover how to attract them to your backyard habitat.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

16 BACKYARD BRRRR'DS
Walk-in (All ages) Find out which feathery friends you'll see on a cold Missouri day. Enjoy a short birding hike on the nature trail and see what birds stick around through the winter. We'll return to the lobby and make a simple feeder.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

23 BILL FULL
Walk-in (All ages) Ever notice how bird beaks are different sizes and shapes? That's because they are designed for the specific food that the bird eats. Using various tools to replicate a bird's beak, you will discover what beak shape works best for the variety of food birds eat: sipping nectar, cracking nuts and seeds, ripping flesh, probing for insects, and more.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

23 FRUIT-FILLED FEEDERS
Walk-in (All ages) These are lean days if you're a wild animal foraging through the snow and winter chill! We can do our part to help out by making these hanging feeders to bring those backyard visitors into view. Each participant takes home their own bird feeder.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

23 INSECT PUPPETS
Walk-in (All ages) Join the “Bug Lady” and learn about insects as you make fascinating insect puppets. What special abilities does your insect puppet possess? What makes it special? Insects will be showing themselves soon and you can be ready to observe their many traits and talents by attending this session.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–1 p.m.

march

1 OUTDOOR SKILLS
Walk-in (All ages) Camping season is right around the corner so now is the time to learn some new outdoor skills or brush up on old ones. You will have a chance to learn various ways to start a fire, prepare a delicious camp meal or use a compass, and more. Mark it on your calendar now!
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

8 BUILDING BLUEBIRD HOUSES
By reservation (Ages 9 and up) What bird is our state bird? Would you like for one to live near you? Come on in and make a nesting box for our bluebirds. Learn about their habitat and where to hang your house upon completion.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–12 noon or 1 p.m.–3 p.m.

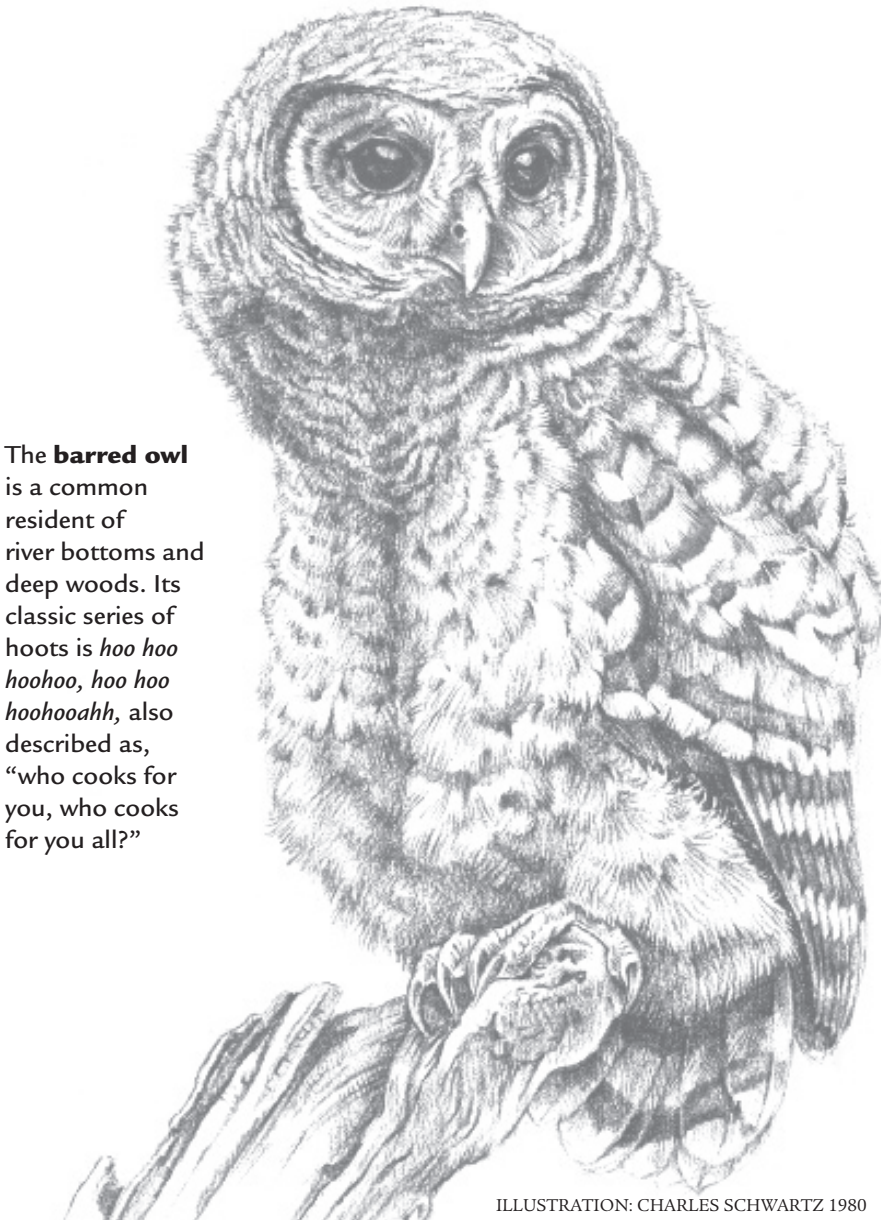
8 DUTCH OVEN COOKING
Walk-in (All ages) Learn to cook a gourmet meal with a Dutch oven. Tim “Dutch” Miller will be on hand demonstrating the use of Dutch ovens. He will be able to answer all your questions and provide you with tasty samples.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–12 noon or 1 p.m.–3 p.m.

15 EXTRAORDINARY EGGS
Walk-in (All ages) Can you identify a bird by its egg? Just like birds, eggs come in all sizes and colors. Test your egg ID skills and make a model of your favorite bird egg. Afterwards, create your own decorative eggs using natural plant dyes such as beets, grape juice and spices.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

15 SSSSSNAKES!
Walk-in (All ages) How does a snake smell? Do all snakes bite? These questions and more will be answered as we discover the fascinating world of snakes. There will be hands on activities to help you appreciate them, as well as a chance to get up close and personal with live snakes. Don't missssss out.
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

22 TROUT FISHING
By reservation (Ages 8 and up) How and where do you fish for trout in Kansas City? We're planning a special fishing trip to show you how to cast for, catch, and prepare a trout. No experience or special gear is required. We'll meet at the Discovery Center to prepare and then carpool to one of the stocked trout lakes in the area to try our luck!
Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

29 GROW NATIVE DAY
Walk-in (All ages) A special event all about landscaping with native plants. Pick up a free tree seedling or starter plant to grow your own backyard prairie garden. See the front page for details.
Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.



The **barred owl** is a common resident of river bottoms and deep woods. Its classic series of hoots is *hoo hoo hoohoo, hoo hoo hoohooahh*, also described as, “who cooks for you, who cooks for you all?”